

STEVEN M. TRUST,)
)
 Plaintiff,)
)
 v.) No. 4:09CV591 AGF
)
 UNKNOWN HIGGINBOTHAM, et al.,)
)
 Defendants.)

This matter is before the Court upon the motion of Steven Trust (registration no. 347836), an inmate at Boonville Correctional Center, for leave to commence this action without payment of the required filing fee [Doc. #2]. For the reasons stated below, the Court finds that the plaintiff does not have sufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee and will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$1.70. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). Furthermore, after reviewing the complaint, the Court will partially dismiss the complaint and will order the Clerk to issue process or cause process to be issued on the non-frivolous portions of the complaint.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), a prisoner bringing a civil action in forma pauperis is required to pay the full amount of the filing fee. If the prisoner has insufficient funds in his or her prison account to pay the entire fee, the Court must

assess and, when funds exist, collect an initial partial filing fee of 20 percent of the greater of (1) the average monthly deposits in the prisoner's account, or (2) the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the prior six-month period. After payment of the initial partial filing fee, the prisoner is required to make monthly payments of 20 percent of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's account. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The agency having custody of the prisoner will forward these monthly payments to the Clerk of Court each time the amount in the prisoner's account exceeds \$10, until the filing fee is fully paid. Id.

Plaintiff has submitted an affidavit and a certified copy of his prison account statement for the six-month period immediately preceding the submission of his complaint. A review of plaintiff's account indicates an average monthly deposit of \$8.50, and an average monthly balance of \$0.04. Plaintiff has insufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee. Accordingly, the Court will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$1.70, which is 20 percent of plaintiff's average monthly deposit.

28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court may dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if "it lacks an arguable basis in either law or in fact."

Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989). An action fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted if it does not plead “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 127 S. Ct. 1955, 1974 (2007).

In reviewing a pro se complaint under § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must give the complaint the benefit of a liberal construction. Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972). The Court must also weigh all factual allegations in favor of the plaintiff, unless the facts alleged are clearly baseless. Denton v. Hernandez, 504 U.S. 25, 32-33 (1992); Scheuer v. Rhodes, 416 U.S. 232, 236 (1974).

The Complaint

Plaintiff brings this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Named as defendants are Unknown Higginbotham (St. Louis County Police Officer), Jason Law (same), Brian Flanagan (same), Douglas Wiese (same), 4 Unknown Police Officers, and St. Louis County, Missouri. The complaint seeks monetary relief.

Plaintiff alleges that on three occasions he was falsely arrested by the individual officers. Plaintiff claims that St. Louis County should be held liable “on the theory of custom and usage.”

Discussion

The complaint survives initial review as to defendants Higginbotham, Law, Flanagan, and Wiese. As a result, the Court will order these defendants to respond to the complaint.

Fictitious parties may not be named as defendants in a civil action. Phelps v. United States, 15 F.3d 735, 739 (8th Cir. 1994). As a result, the Court will dismiss the 4 Unknown Police Officers from this action without prejudice.

A plaintiff must allege sufficient facts to state a claim for relief that is plausible on its face. Twombly, 127 S. Ct. at 1974. Plaintiff's claim that he is suing St. Louis County "on the theory of custom and usage" is conclusory and fails to state any facts, which if proved, would entitle plaintiff to relief against St. Louis County. As a result, the complaint fails to state a claim against St. Louis County.

Accordingly,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that plaintiff's motion to proceed in forma pauperis [Doc. #2] is **GRANTED**.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the plaintiff shall pay an initial filing fee of \$1.70 within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order. Plaintiff is instructed to make his remittance payable to "Clerk, United States District Court," and to include upon it:

(1) his name; (2) his prison registration number; (3) the case number; and (4) that the remittance is for an original proceeding.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that if plaintiff fails to pay the initial partial filing fee within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order, then this case will be dismissed without prejudice.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk shall issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint as to defendants Higginbotham, Law, Flanagan, and Wiese.¹

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(g)(2), defendants Higginbotham, Law, Flanagan, and Wiese shall reply to plaintiff's claims within the time provided by the applicable provisions of Rule 12(a) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk shall not issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint as to defendants 4 Unknown Police Officers or St. Louis County because, as to these defendants, the complaint is legally frivolous or fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or both.

¹These defendants are alleged to be police officers for the St. Louis County Police Department.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this case is assigned to Track 5B: Prisoner Standard.

An appropriate Order of Partial Dismissal shall accompany this Memorandum and Order.

Dated this 12th Day of June, 2009.

/s/ Donald J. Stohr
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE